

# THEOSOPHICAL PHILOSOPHY

---

*Articles by H. P. Blavatsky*

**"WHAT IS TRUTH?"**

**OLD PHILOSOPHERS AND MODERN CRITICS**

---

**H. P. BLAVATSKY SERIES • No. 30**

**THEOSOPHY COMPANY (MYSORE) PRIVATE LTD.  
BANGALORE 560 004**

## OBJECTS OF THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

- I *To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or color;*
- II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*
- III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

The articles of H. P. Blavatsky and W. Q. Judge which originally appeared in the *Theosophist*, *Lucifer* and the *Path*, were issued in pamphlet form by THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY, Los Angeles, U.S.A. For the benefit of students and inquirers in India, these are now being re-printed in an Indian edition.

Reprint Edition : 1986

By courtesy: The Theosophy Company, 245, West 33rd St., Los Angeles, Calif. 90007, U.S.A.

Printed by V. N. Iyer at Commercial Printing House, 41/1, 3rd Main Road, Gandhinagar, Bangalore 560 009 and published by J. M. Tijoriwala for Theosophy Company (Mysore) Private Ltd., 4, Sir Krishna Rao Road, Basavangudi, Bangalore 560 004.



## FOREWORD

THE philosophical question, "What is Truth?", became the title of one of H. P. Blavatsky's most important articles, which she published in *Lucifer* for February, 1888. The answer she gave is crucial to other questions, such as the issue of "authority" in philosophy and Theosophy, and she also provided an illustration of how that answer might be practically applied—in this case by describing the editorial policy of her Magazine.

While never equivocating in respect to the contrast between modern scientific or theological opinion and the tenets of the Wisdom-Religion, H. P. B. was at the same time eager to recognize truth wherever found, even if it were no more than a "particle of gold lost in a ton of rubbish." And she is meticulous in giving full credit to scientists and scholars for their conscientious labors, even when, in certain of their conclusions, she finds them utterly wrong.

There is in this article also a valuable expression concerning Theosophical teachings which "transcend a certain limit of speculation"—consisting of ideas which could only be withered by the harsh atmosphere of controversy. Of his "deeper spiritual, and one may almost say religious, beliefs," she wrote, "no true Theosophist ought to degrade these by subjecting them to public discussion, but ought rather to treasure and hide them deep within the sanctuary of his innermost soul." And in Theosophical publications, she said, when such ideas are dealt with, they ought to be embodied "as hypotheses offered to the consideration of the thinking portion of the public." This view, like the general statement about the policy of *Lucifer*, flows directly from the considerations developed in this article concerning relative and absolute truth.

The second article printed here, "Old Philosophers and Modern Critics," was posthumously published in *Lucifer* for July and August, 1892. It is obviously an expansion of material which appeared in the first volume of *Isis Unveiled* (1877), in the section, "Before the Veil." The importance of Plato, during previous European history, as the link between Eastern and Western thought is made even clearer in this article, through further explanations of the Greek philosopher's meanings, which are now interpreted in the vocabulary of the sevenfold nature of man and by the concepts provided in *The Secret Doctrine* (1888) and *The Key to Theosophy* (1889). Plato and his followers, including the Neoplatonists, are shown to have been thoroughly familiar with the Theosophical teachings of the after-death states and the doctrines of Karma and Reincarnation.

The student of this article will again recognize why Madame Blavatsky, in the Introductory to *The Secret Doctrine* (I, xl, xlv), invites her reader "to give all his attention to that millennium which divided the pre-Christian and the post-Christian periods, by the year ONE of the Nativity"—the period which, "beginning with Buddha and Pythagoras at the one end and the Neo-Platonists at the other, is the only focus left in history wherein converge for the last time the bright rays of light streaming from the æons of time gone by, unobscured by the hand of bigotry and fanaticism."

## “WHAT IS TRUTH?”

*Truth* is the Voice of Nature and of Time—  
*Truth* is the startling monitor *within us*—  
Naught is without it, it comes from the stars,  
The golden sun, and every breeze that blows . . .

—W. THOMPSON BACON

. . . Fair Truth's immortal sun  
Is sometimes hid in clouds; not that her light  
Is in itself defective, but obscured  
By my weak prejudice, imperfect faith  
And all the thousand causes which obstruct  
The growth of goodness . . .

—HANNAH MORE

WHAT is Truth?" asked Pilate of one who, if the claims of the Christian Church are even approximately correct, must have known it. But He kept silent. And the truth which He did not divulge, remained unrevealed, for his later followers as much as for the Roman Governor. The silence of Jesus, however, on this and other occasions, does not prevent his present followers from acting as though they had received the ultimate and absolute Truth itself; and from ignoring the fact that only such Words of Wisdom had been given to them as contained a share of the truth, itself concealed in parables and dark, though beautiful, sayings.<sup>1</sup>

This policy led gradually to dogmatism and assertion. Dogmatism in churches, dogmatism in science, dogmatism everywhere. The possible truths, hazily perceived in the world of abstraction, like those inferred from observation and experiment in the world of matter, are forced upon the profane multitudes, too busy to think for themselves, under the form of *Divine revelation* and *Scientific authority*. But the same question stands open from the days of Socrates and Pilate down to our own age of wholesale negation: is there such a thing as *absolute truth* in the hands of any one party or man? Reason answers, "there cannot be." There is no room for absolute truth upon any subject whatsoever, in a world as finite and conditioned as man is himself. But there are relative truths, and we have to make the best we can of them.

<sup>1</sup> Jesus says to the "Twelve"—Unto you is given the mystery of the Kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all things are done in parables," etc. (Mark iv 11.)

In every age there have been Sages who had mastered the absolute and yet could teach but relative truths. For none yet, born of mortal woman in *our* race, has, or could have given out, the whole and the final truth to another man, for every one of us has to find that (to him) final knowledge *in* himself. As no two minds can be absolutely alike, each has to receive the supreme illumination *through* itself, according to its capacity, and from no *human* light. The greatest adept living can reveal of the Universal Truth only so much as the mind he is impressing it upon can assimilate, and no more. *Tot homines, quot sententiae*—is an immortal truism. The sun is one, but its beams are numberless; and the effects produced are beneficent or maleficent, according to the nature and constitution of the objects they shine upon. Polarity is universal, but the polariser lies in our own consciousness. In proportion as our consciousness is elevated towards absolute truth, so do we men assimilate it more or less absolutely. But man's consciousness again, is only the sunflower of the earth. Longing for the warm ray, the plant can only turn to the sun, and move round and round in following the course of the unreachable luminary: its roots keep it fast to the soil, and half its life is passed in the shadow. . . .

Still each of us can relatively reach the Sun of Truth even on this earth, and assimilate its warmest and most direct rays, however differentiated they may become after their long journey through the physical particles in space. To achieve this, there are two methods. On the physical plane we may use our mental polariscope: and, analyzing the properties of each ray, choose the purest. On the plane of spirituality, to reach the Sun of Truth we must work in dead earnest for the development of our higher nature. We know that by paralyzing gradually within ourselves the appetites of the lower personality, and thereby deadening the voice of the purely physiological mind—that mind which depends upon, and is inseparable from, its medium or *vehicle*, the organic brain—the animal man in us may make room for the spiritual; and once aroused from its latent state, the highest spiritual senses and perceptions grow in us in proportion, and develop *pari passu* with the “divine man.” This is what the great adepts, the Yogis in the East and the Mystics in the West, have always done and are still doing.

But we also know, that with a few exceptions, no man of the world, no materialist, will ever believe in the existence of such adepts, or even in the possibility of such a spiritual or psychic

development. "The (ancient) fool hath said in his heart, There is no God"; the modern says, "There are no adepts on earth, they are figments of your diseased fancy." Knowing this we hasten to reassure our readers of the Thomas Didymus type. We beg them to turn in this magazine to reading more congenial to them; say to the miscellaneous papers on Hylo-Idealism, by various writers.<sup>2</sup>

For LUCIFER tries to satisfy its readers of whatever "school of thought," and shows itself equally impartially to Theist and Atheist Mystic and Agnostic, Christian and Gentile. Such articles as our editorials, the Comments on "Light on the Path," etc., etc.—are not intended for Materialists. They are addressed to Theosophists, or readers who know in their hearts that Masters of Wisdom *do* exist: and, though *absolute* truth is not on earth and has to be searched for in higher regions, that there still are, even on this silly, ever-whirling little globe of ours, some things that are not even dreamt of in Western philosophy.

To return to our subject. It thus follows that, though "general *abstract* truth is the most precious of all blessings" for many of us, as it was for Rousseau, we have, meanwhile, to be satisfied with relative truths. In sober fact, we are a poor set of mortals at best, ever in dread before the face of even a relative truth, lest it should devour ourselves and our petty little preconceptions along with us. As for an absolute truth, most of us are as incapable of seeing it as of reaching the moon on a bicycle. Firstly, because absolute truth is as immovable as the mountain of Mahomet, which refused to disturb itself for the prophet, so that he had to go to it himself. And we have to follow his example if he would approach it even at a distance. Secondly, because the kingdom of absolute truth is not of this world, while we are too much of it. And thirdly, because notwithstanding that in the poet's fancy man is

. . . . . The abstract  
Of all perfection, which the workmanship  
Of heaven hath modelled. . . . .

in reality he is a sorry bundle of anomalies and paradoxes, an

<sup>2</sup> e.g., to the little article "Autocentricism"—on the same "philosophy," or again, to the apex of the Hylo-idealist pyramid in this Number. It is a letter of protest by the learned Founder of the School in question, against a *mistake* of ours. He complains of our "coupling" his name with those of Mr. Herbert Spencer, Darwin, Huxley, and others on the question of atheism and materialism, as the said lights in the psychological and physical sciences are considered by Dr. Lewins too flickering, too "compromising" and weak, to deserve the honourable appellation of Atheists or even Agnostics. See, "Correspondence" in Double Column, and the reply by "The Adversary."

empty wind bag inflated with his own importance, with contradictory and easily influenced opinions. He is at once an arrogant and a weak creature, which though in constant dread of some authority, terrestrial or celestial, will yet—

. . . . . like an angry ape,  
Play such fantastic tricks before high Heaven  
As make the angels weep.

Now, since truth is a multifaced jewel, the facets of which it is impossible to perceive all at once; and since, again, no two men, however anxious to discern truth, can see even one of those facets alike, what can be done to help them to perceive it? As physical man, limited and trammelled from every side by illusions, cannot reach truth by the light of his terrestrial perceptions, we say—develop in you the *inner* knowledge. From the time when the Delphic oracle said to the enquirer “Man, know thyself”, no greater or more important truth was ever taught. Without such perception, man will remain ever blind to even many a relative, let alone absolute, truth. Man has to *know himself*, i.e., acquire the *inner* perceptions which never deceive, before he can master any absolute truth. Absolute truth is *the symbol of Eternity*, and no *finite* mind can ever grasp the eternal, hence, no truth in its fulness can ever dawn upon it. To reach the state during which man sees and senses it, we have to paralyze the senses of the external man of clay. This is a difficult task, we may be told, and most people will, at this rate, prefer to remain satisfied with relative truths, no doubt. But to approach even terrestrial truths requires, first of all, *love of truth for its own sake*, for otherwise no recognition of it will follow. And who loves truth in this age for its own sake? How many of us are prepared to search for, accept, and carry it out, in the midst of a society in which anything that would achieve success *has to be built on appearances, not on reality, on self-assertion, not on intrinsic value?* We are fully aware of the difficulties in the way of receiving truth. The fair heavenly maiden descends only on a (to her) congenial soil—the soil of an impartial, unprejudiced mind, illuminated by pure Spiritual Consciousness; and both are truly rare dwellers in civilized lands. In our century of steam and electricity, when man lives at a maddening speed that leaves him barely time for reflection, he allows himself usually to be drifted down from cradle to grave, nailed to the Procrustean bed of custom and conventionality. Now conventionality—pure and simple—is a congenital LIE, as it is in every case a “*simulation* of feelings according to a received stand-

ard" (F.W. Robertson's definition); and where there is any simulation *there cannot be any truth*. How profound the remark made by Byron, that "truth is a gem that is found at a great depth; whilst on the surface of this world all things are weighed *by the false scales of custom*," is best known to those who are forced to live in the stifling atmosphere of such social conventionalism, and who, even when willing and anxious to learn, dare not accept the truth they long for, for fear of the ferocious Moloch called Society.

Look around you, reader; study the accounts given by world-known travellers, recall the joint observations of literary thinkers, the data of science and of statistics. Draw the picture of modern society, of modern politics, of modern religion and modern life in general before your mind's eye. Remember the ways and customs of every cultured race and nation under the sun. Observe the doings and the moral attitude of people in the civilized centres of Europe, America, and even of the far East and the colonies, everywhere where the white man has carried the "benefits" of so-called civilization. And now, having passed in review all this, pause and reflect, and then name, *if you can*, that blessed *Eldorado*, that exceptional spot on the globe, *where TRUTH is the honoured guest, and LIE and SHAM the ostracised outcasts*? YOU CANNOT. Nor can any one else, unless he is prepared and determined to add his mite to the mass of falsehood that reigns supreme in every department of national and social life. "Truth!" cried Carlyle, "truth, though the heavens crush me for following her, no falsehood, though a whole celestial Lubberland were the prize of Apostasy." Noble words, these. But how many think, and how many will *dare* to speak as Carlyle did, in our nineteenth century day? Does not the gigantic appalling majority prefer to a man the "paradise of Do-nothings," the *pays de Cocagne* of heartless selfishness? It is this majority that recoils terror-stricken before the most shadowy outline of every new and unpopular truth, out of mere cowardly fear, lest Mrs. Harris should denounce, and Mrs. Grundy condemn, its converts to the torture of being rent piecemeal by her murderous tongue.

SELFISHNESS, the first-born of Ignorance, and the fruit of the teaching which asserts that for every newly-born infant a new soul, *separate and distinct* from the Universal Soul, is "created"—this Selfishness is the impassable wall between the *personal* Self and Truth. It is the prolific mother of all human vices, *Lie* being born out of the necessity for dissembling, and *Hypocrisy* out of the desire

to mask *Lie*. It is the fungus growing and strengthening with age in every human heart in which it has devoured all better feelings. Selfishness kills every noble impulse in our natures, and is the one deity, fearing no faithlessness or desertion from its votaries. Hence, we see it reign supreme in the world and in so-called fashionable society. As a result, we live, and move, and have our being in this god of darkness under his trinitarian aspect of Sham, Humbug, and Falsehood, called RESPECTABILITY.

Is this Truth and Fact, or is it slander? Turn whichever way you will, and you find, from the top of the social ladder to the bottom, deceit and hypocrisy at work for dear Self's sake, in every nation as in every individual. But nations, by tacit agreement, have decided that selfish motives in politics shall be called "noble national aspiration, patriotism," etc.; and the citizen views it in his family circle as "domestic virtue." Nevertheless, Selfishness, whether it breeds desire for aggrandizement of territory, or competition in commerce at the expense of one's neighbour, can never be regarded as a virtue. We see smooth-tongued DECEIT and BRUTE FORCE—the *Jachin* and *Boaz* of every International Temple of Solomon—called Diplomacy, and we call it by its right name. Because the diplomat bows low before these two pillars of national glory and politics, and puts their masonic symbolism "in (cunning) strength shall this my house be established" into daily practice; *i. e.*, gets by deceit what he cannot obtain by force—shall we applaud him? A diplomat's qualification—"dexterity or skill in securing advantages"—for one's own country at the expense of other countries, can hardly be achieved by speaking *truth*, but verily by a wily and deceitful tongue; and, therefore, LUCIFER calls such action—a *living*, and an evident LIE.

But it is not in politics alone that custom and selfishness have agreed to call deceit and lie virtue, and to reward him who lies best with public statues. Every class of Society lives on LIE, and would fall to pieces without it. Cultured, God-and-law-fearing aristocracy, being as fond of the forbidden fruit as any plebeian, is forced to lie from morn to noon in order to cover what it is pleased to term its "little peccadillos," but which TRUTH regards as gross immorality. Society of the middle classes is honeycombed with false smiles, false talk, and mutual treachery. For the majority religion has become a thin tinsel veil thrown over the corpse of spiritual faith. The master goes to church to deceive his servants; the starv-



ing curate—preaching what he has ceased to believe in—hood-winks his bishop; the bishop—his God. *Dailies*, political and social, might adopt with advantage for their motto Georges Dandin's immortal query—"Lequel de nous deux trompe-t-on ici?—Even Science, once the anchor of the salvation of Truth, has ceased to be the temple of *naked* Fact. Almost to a man the Scientists strive now only to force upon their colleagues and the public the acceptance of some personal hobby, of some new-fangled theory, which will shed lustre on their name and fame. A Scientist is as ready to suppress damaging evidence against a current scientific hypothesis in our times, as a missionary in heathen-land, or a preacher at home, to persuade his congregation that modern geology is a lie, and evolution but vanity and vexation of spirit.

Such is the actual state of things in 1888 A.D., and yet we are taken to task by certain papers for seeing this year in more than gloomy colours!

Lie has spread to such extent—supported as it is by custom and conventionalities—that even chronology forces people to lie. The suffixes A.D. and B.C. used after the dates of the year by Jew and Heathen, in European and even Asiatic lands, by the Materialist and the Agnostic as much as by the Christian, at home, are—a *lie* used to sanction another LIE.

Where then is even relative truth to be found? If, so far back as the century of Democritus, she appeared to him under the form of a goddess lying at the very bottom of a well, so deep that it gave but little hope for her release; under the present circumstances we have a certain right to believe her hidden, at least, as far off as the ever invisible *dark* side of the moon. This is why, perhaps, all the votaries of hidden truths are forthwith set down as lunatics. However it may be, in no case and under no threat shall LUCIFER be ever forced into pandering to any universally and tacitly recognised and as universally practised lie, but will hold to fact, pure and simple, trying to proclaim truth whensoever found, and under no cowardly mask. Bigotry and intolerance may be regarded as orthodox and sound policy, and the encouraging of social prejudices and personal hobbies at the cost of truth, as a wise course to pursue in order to secure success for a publication. Let it be so. The Editors of LUCIFER are Theosophists, and their motto is chosen: *Vera pro gratiis.*

They are quite aware that LUCIFER'S libations and sacrifices to the goddess Truth do not send a sweet savoury smoke into the noses of the lords of the press, nor does the bright "Son of the Morning" smell sweet in their nostrils. He is ignored when not abused as—*veritas odium paret*. Even his friends are beginning to find fault with him. They cannot see *why it should not be a purely Theosophical magazine*, in other words, why it refuses to be dogmatic and bigoted. Instead of devoting every inch of space to theosophical and occult teachings, it opens its pages "to the publication of the most grotesquely heterogeneous elements and conflicting doctrines." This is the chief accusation, to which we answer—why not? Theosophy is divine knowledge, and knowledge is truth: every *true* fact, every sincere word are thus part and parcel of Theosophy. One who is skilled in divine alchemy, or even approximately blessed with the gift of the perception of truth, will find and extract it from an erroneous as much as from a correct statement. However small the particle of gold lost in a ton of rubbish, it is the noble metal still, and worthy of being dug out even at the price of some extra trouble. As has been said, it is often as useful to know what a thing *is not*, as to learn what it *is*. The average reader can hardly hope to find any fact in a sectarian publication under all its aspects, *pro* and *con*, for either one way or the other its presentation is sure to be biased, and the scales helped to incline to that side to which its editor's special policy is directed. A Theosophical magazine is thus, perhaps, the only publication where one may hope to find, at any rate, the unbiased, if still only approximate truth and fact. Naked truth is reflected in LUCIFER under its many aspects, for no philosophical or religious views are excluded from its pages. And, as every philosophy and religion, however incomplete, unsatisfactory, and even foolish some may be occasionally, must be based on a truth and fact of some kind, the reader has thus the opportunity of comparing, analysing, and choosing from these several philosophies discussed therein. LUCIFER offers as many facets of the One universal jewel as its limited space will permit, and says to its readers: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve: whether the gods that were on the other side of the flood which submerged man's reasoning powers and divine knowledge, or the gods of the Amorites of *custom* and *social falsehood*, or again, the Lord of (the highest) Self—the bright destroyer of the dark power of illusion?" Surely it is that philosophy that tends to diminish, instead of adding to,

the sum of human misery, which is the best.

At all events, the choice is there, and for this purpose only have we opened our pages to every kind of contributors. Therefore do you find in them the views of a Christian clergyman who believes in his God and Christ, but rejects the wicked interpretations and the enforced dogmas of his ambitious proud Church, along with the doctrines of the Hylo-Idealist, who denies God, soul, and immortality, and believes in nought save himself. The rankest Materialists will find hospitality in our journal; aye, even those who have not scrupled to fill pages of it with sneers and personal remarks upon ourselves, and abuse of the doctrines of Theosophy, so dear to us. When a journal of *free thought*, conducted by an Atheist, inserts an article by a Mystic or Theosophist in praise of his occult views and the mystery of Parabrahmam, and passes on it only a few casual remarks, then shall we say LUCIFER has found a rival. When a Christian periodical or missionary organ accepts an article from the pen of a free-thinker deriding belief in Adam and his rib, and passes criticism on Christianity—its editor's faith—in meek silence, then it will have become worthy of LUCIFER, and may be said truly to have reached that degree of tolerance when it may be placed on a level with any Theosophical publication.

But so long as none of these organs do something of the kind, they are all sectarian, bigoted, intolerant, and can never have an idea of truth and justice. They may throw innuendoes against LUCIFER and its editors, they cannot affect either. In fact, the editors of that magazine feel proud of such criticism and accusations, as they are witnesses to the absolute absence of bigotry, or arrogance of any kind in theosophy, the result of the divine beauty of the doctrines it preaches. For, as said, Theosophy allows a hearing and a fair chance to all. It deems no views—if sincere—entirely destitute of truth. It respects thinking men, to whatever class of thought they may belong. Ever ready to oppose ideas and views which can only create confusion without benefiting philosophy, it leaves their expounders personally to believe in whatever they please, and does justice to their ideas when they are good. Indeed, the conclusions or deductions of a philosophic writer may be entirely opposed to our views and the teachings we expound; yet his premises and statements of facts may be quite correct, and other people may profit by the adverse philosophy, even if we ourselves reject it, believing we have something higher and still nearer to the truth. In any case, our

profession of faith is now made plain, and all that is said in the foregoing pages both justifies and explains our editorial policy.

To sum up the idea, with regard to absolute and relative truth, we can only repeat what we said before. *Outside a certain highly spiritual and elevated state of mind, during which Man is at one with the UNIVERSAL MIND—he can get nought on earth but relative truth, or truths, from whatsoever philosophy or religion.* Were even the goddess who dwells at the bottom of the well to issue from her place of confinement, she could give man no more than he can assimilate. Meanwhile, every one can sit near that well—the name of which is KNOWLEDGE—and gaze into its depths in the hope of seeing Truth's fair image reflected, at least, on the dark waters. This, however, as remarked by Richter, presents a certain danger. Some truth, to be sure, may be occasionally reflected as in a mirror on the spot we gaze upon, and thus reward the patient student. But, adds the German thinker, "I have heard that some philosophers in seeking for Truth, to pay homage to her, have seen their own image in the water and adored it instead." . . .

It is to avoid such a calamity—one that has befallen every founder of a religious or philosophical school—that the editors are studiously careful not to offer the reader only those truths which they find reflected in their own personal brains. They offer the public a wide choice, and refuse to show bigotry and intolerance, which are the chief landmarks on the path of Sectarianism. But, while leaving the widest margin possible for comparison, our opponents cannot hope to find *their faces* reflected on the clear waters of our LUCIFER, without remarks or just criticism upon the most prominent features thereof, if in contrast with theosophical views.

This, however, only within the cover of the public magazine, and so far as regards the merely intellectual aspect of philosophical truths. Concerning the deeper spiritual, and one may almost say religious, beliefs, no true Theosophist ought to degrade these by subjecting them to public discussion, but ought rather to treasure and hide them deep within the sanctuary of his innermost soul. Such beliefs and doctrines should never be rashly given out, as they risk unavoidable profanation by the rough handling of the indifferent and the critical. Nor ought they to be embodied in any publication except as hypotheses offered to the consideration of the thinking portion of the public. Theosophical truths, when they transcend a certain limit of speculation, had better remain concealed from

public view, for the “evidence of things not seen” is no evidence save to him who sees, hears, and senses it. It is not to be dragged outside the “Holy of Holies,” the temple of the impersonal divine *Ego*, or the indwelling SELF. For, while every fact outside *its* perception can, as we have shown, be, at best, only a relative truth, a ray from the absolute truth can reflect itself only in the pure mirror of its own flame—our highest SPIRITUAL CONSCIOUSNESS. And how can the darkness (of illusion) comprehend the LIGHT that shineth in it?

## OLD PHILOSOPHERS AND MODERN CRITICS

**I**N one of the oldest philosophies and religious systems of pre-historic times, we read that at the end of a Maha-Pralaya (general dissolution) the great Soul, Param-Atma, the Self-Existent, that which can be "apprehended only by the suprasensual," becomes "*manifest of itself*"<sup>1</sup>

The Hindus give this "Existence" various names, one of which is Svayambhu, or Self-existent. This Svayambhu emanates from itself the creative faculty, or Svayambhuva—the "Son of the Self-Existent"—and the One becomes Two; this in its turn evolves a third principle with the potentiality of becoming Matter which the orthodox call Viraj, or the Universe.<sup>2</sup> This incomprehensible Trinity became later anthropomorphized into the Trimurti, known as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, the symbols of the creative, the preservative, and the destructive powers in Nature—and at the same time of the transforming or regenerating forces, or rather of the three aspects of the one Universal Force. It is the Tridanda, the triply manifested Unity, which gave rise to the orthodox AUM, which with them is but the abbreviated Trimurti. It is only under this triple aspect that the profane masses can comprehend the great mystery. When the triple God becomes Sharira, or puts on a visible form, he typifies all the principles of Matter, all the germs of life, he is the God of the three visages, or triple power, the essence of the Vedic Triad. "Let the Brahmans know the Sacred Syllable [Aum], the three words of the Savitri, and read the Vedas daily."<sup>3</sup>

After having produced the universe, He whose power is incomprehensible vanished again, absorbed in the Supreme Soul. . . . Having retired into the primitive darkness, the Great Soul remains within the unknown, and is void of all form. . . .

When having again reunited the subtile elementary principles, it introduces itself into either a vegetable or animal seed, it assumes at each a new form.

1 See *Manava Dharma Shashtra (Laws of Manu)*, i, 5, 6, 7, 8, et seq.

2 Every student of Theosophy will recognize in these three consecutive emanations the three Logoi of the *Secret Doctrine* and the Theosophical Scheme.

3 Compare *Manu*, iv. 125.

It is thus that, by an alternative waking and rest, the Immutable Being causes to revive and die eternally all the existing creatures, active and inert.<sup>4</sup>

He who has studied the speculations of Pythagoras on the Monad, which, after emanating the Duad, retires into silence and darkness and thus creates the Triad, can realize whence came the Philosophy of the great Samian Sage, and after him that of Socrates and Plato. The mystic Decad ( $1 + 2 + 3 + 4 = 10$ ) is a way of expressing this idea. The One is God; the Two, matter; the three, combining Monad and Duad and partaking of the nature of both, is the phenomenal World; the Tetrad, or form of perfection, expresses the emptiness of all; and the Decad, or sum of all, involves the entire Kosmos.

Let us see how the Brahmanical ideas tally with the pre-Christian Pagan Philosophies and with Christianity itself. It is with the Platonic Philosophy, the most elaborate compend of the abstruse systems of ancient India, that we had better begin.

Although twenty-two and a half centuries have elapsed since the death of Plato, the great minds of the world are still occupied with his writing. He was, in the fullest sense of the word, the world's interpreter. And the greatest Philosopher of the pre-Christian era faithfully mirrored in his works the spiritualism of the Vedic Philosophers, who lived thousands of years before himself, with its metaphysical expression. Vyasa, Jaimini, Kapila, Patanjali, and many others, will be found to have transmitted their indelible imprint through the intervening centuries, by means of Pythagoras, upon Plato and his school. Thus is warranted the inference that to Plato and the ancient Hindu Sages the same wisdom was alike revealed. And so surviving the shock of time, what can this wisdom be but divine and eternal?

Plato taught of justice as subsisting in the soul and as being the greatest good of its possessor. "Men, in proportion to their intellect, have admitted his transcendent claims"; yet his commentators, almost with one consent, shrink from every passage which implies that his Metaphysics are based on a solid foundation, and not on ideal conceptions.

But Plato could not accept a Philosophy destitute of spiritual aspirations; with him the two were at one. For the Old Grecian Sage

<sup>4</sup> Compare *Manu*, i, 50, and other shlokas.

there was a single object of attainment: REAL KNOWLEDGE. He considered those only to be genuine Philosophers, or students of truth, who possess the knowledge of the really-existing, in opposition to mere objects of perception; of the always-existing, in opposition to the transitory; and of that which exists permanently, in opposition to that which waxes, wanes, and is alternately developed and destroyed.

Beyond all finite existences and secondary causes, all laws, ideas, and principles, there is an INTELLIGENCE OR MIND [*NOVS Nous*, the Spirit] the first principle of all principles, the Supreme Idea on which all other ideas are grounded; the ultimate substance from which all things derive their being and essence, the first and efficient Cause of all the order, and harmony, and beauty, and excellency, and goodness, which pervade the universe—who is called, by way of preeminence and excellence, the Supreme Good, the God (ὁ θεός), “the God over all” (ὁ ἐπὶ πάντων θεός).<sup>5</sup>

It is not difficult for a Theosophist to recognize in this “God” (a) the UNIVERSAL MIND in its cosmic aspect; and (b) the Higher Ego in man in its microcosmic. For, as Plato says, He is not the truth nor the intelligence; “but the Father of it”; i.e., the “Father” of the Lower Manas, our personal “brain-mind, which depends for its manifestations on the organs of sense. Though this eternal essence of things may not be perceptible by our physical senses, it may be apprehended by the mind of those who are not wilfully obtuse.”<sup>6</sup> We find Plato stating distinctly that everything visible was created or evolved out of the invisible and eternal WILL, and after its fashion. Our Heaven—he says—was produced according to the eternal pattern of the “Ideal World,” contained, like everything else, in the dodecahedron, the geometrical model used by the Deity.<sup>7</sup> With Plato, the Primal Being is an emanation of the Demiurgic Mind (Nous), which contains within itself from eternity the “Idea” of the “to-be-created world,” and this Idea it produces out of itself.<sup>8</sup> The laws of Nature are the established relations of this Idea to the forms of its manifestations. Two thousand years later, we find the great German philosopher Schopenhauer borrowing this conception when stating that:

These forms are time, space and causality. Through time and

<sup>5</sup> Cocker, *Christianity and Greek Philosophy*, xi. 377.

<sup>6</sup> This “God” is the Universal Mind, Alaya the source from which the “God” in each one of us has emanated.

<sup>7</sup> Compare *Timæus Locrius*, p. 97.

<sup>8</sup> See *Movers’ Explanations*, p. 268.



space the idea varies in its numberless manifestations.

Thus, if Theology has often disfigured ancient Theosophy, Modern Psychology and Modern Science have disfigured Ancient Philosophy Both borrowed without any acknowledgement from the Ancient Wisdom and reviled and belittled it whenever they could. But, for lack of comprehension of the great philosophical and theosophical principles, the methods of Modern Science, however exact, must end in nullity. In no one branch can it demonstrate the origin and ultimate of things. Instead of tracing the effect from its primal source, its progress is the reverse. Its higher types, it teaches, are all evolved from antecedent lower ones. It starts from the bottom of the cycle, led on step by step in the great labyrinth of Nature, by a thread of Matter. As soon as this breaks, the clue is lost, and it recoils in affright from the Incomprehensible, and confesses itself powerless. Not so did Plato and his disciples. With them, as with us, *the lower types were but the concrete images of the higher abstract types.* The Spirit, which is immortal, has an arithmetical, as the body has a geometrical, beginning. This beginning, as the reflection of the great universal Archæus, is self-moving, and from the centre diffuses itself over the whole body of the microcosm.

Is it the sad perception of this truth, the recognition and the adoption of which by any man of Science would now prove suicidal, that makes so many Scientists and famous scholars confess how powerless is Physical Science, even over the world of Matter?

Almost a century separated Plato from Pythagoras.<sup>9</sup> so that they could not have been acquainted with each other. But both were Initiates, and therefore it is not surprising to find that both teach the same doctrine concerning the Universal Soul. Pythagoras taught his disciples that God is the Universal Mind diffused through all things, and that this Mind by the sole virtue of its universal sameness could be communicated from one object to another, and be made to create all things by the sole will-power of man. With the ancient Greeks, too, Kurios was the God-Mind (Nous). "Now, Koros (Kurios) signifies the pure and unmixed nature of intellect—wisdom," says Plato in the *cratylus*. Thus we find all the great philosophers, from Pythagoras through Timæus of Locris and Plato down to the Neo-Platonists, deriving the Mind-Soul of man from the Universal Mind-Soul.

Of myths and symbols, the despair of modern Orientalism, Plato

<sup>9</sup> Pythagoras was born in 580 and Plato in 430 B.C.

declares, in the *Gorgias* and *Phædo*, that they were the vehicles of great truths well worth seeking. But commentators are so little *en rapport* with the great Philosopher as to be compelled to acknowledge that they are ignorant where "the doctrinal ends, and the mythical begins." Plato put to flight the popular superstitions concerning magic and dæmons, and developed the exaggerated notions of the time into rational theories and metaphysical conceptions. Perhaps these would not quite stand the inductive method of reasoning established by Aristotle; nevertheless they are satisfactory in the highest degree to those who apprehend the existence of the higher faculty of insight or intuition, as affording a criterion for ascertaining truth. For there are few myths in any religious system but have an historical as well as a scientific foundation. Myths, as Pococke ably expresses it,

Are now proved to be fables, just in proportion as we misunderstand them; truths, in proportion as they were once understood. Our ignorance it is which has made a myth of history; and our ignorance is an Hellenic inheritance, much of it the result of Hellenic vanity.<sup>10</sup>

Basing all his doctrines upon the presence of the Supreme Mind, Plato taught that the Nous, Spirit, or Rational Soul of man, being "generated by the Divine Father," possessed a nature kindred to, or even homogeneous with, the Divinity, and capable of beholding the eternal realities. This faculty of contemplating reality in a direct and immediate manner belongs to God alone; the aspiration for this knowledge constitutes what is really meant by Philosophy—the love of wisdom. The love of truth is inherently the love of good; and predominating over every desire of the soul, purifying it and assimilating it to the divine, thus governing every act of the individual, it raises man to a participation and communion with Divinity, and restores him to the likeness of God. Says Plato in the *Theætetus*:

This flight consists in becoming like God, and this assimilation is the becoming just and holy with wisdom.

The basis of this assimilation is always asserted to be the pre-existence of the Spirit or Nous. In the allegory of the chariot and winged steeds, given in the *Phædrus*, he represents the psychical nature as composite or two-fold; the *thumos*, or epithumetic part, formed from the substances of the world of phenomena; and the *thumoeides* (θυμολογιᾶς), the essence of which is linked to the eternal

<sup>10</sup> *India in Greece*, Preface, p. ix.

world. The present earth-life is a fall and a punishment. The Soul dwells in "the grave which we call the body," and in its incorporate state, and previous to the discipline of education, the noetic or spiritual element is "asleep." Life is thus a dream, rather than a reality. Like the captives in the subterranean cave, described in the *Republic*, our backs being turned to the light, we perceive only the shadows of objects, and think them the actual realities. Is not this the idea of Maya, or the illusion of the senses in physical life, which is so marked a feature in the Hindu Philosophy? But these shadows, if we have not given ourselves up absolutely to the sensuous nature, arouse in us the reminiscence of that higher world that we once inhabited.

The interior spirit has some dim and shadowy recollection of its antenatal state of bliss, and some instinctive and proleptic yearnings for its return.

It is the province of the discipline of Philosophy to disenthral the Soul from the bondage of sense, and to raise it into the empyrean of pure thought, to the vision of eternal truth, goodness, and beauty, thus uniting it to Spirit.

The soul cannot come into the form of a man if it has never seen the truth. This is a recollection of those things which our soul formerly saw when journeying with Deity, despising the things which we now say are, and looking upto that which really is. Wherefore the nous, or spirit, of the Philosopher [or student of the higher truth] alone is furnished with wings; because he, to the best of his ability, keeps these things in mind, of which the contemplation renders even Deity itself divine. By making the right use of these things remembered from the former life, by constantly perfecting himself in the perfect mysteries, a man becomes truly perfect—an initiate into the diviner wisdom.

The Philosophy of Plato, we are assured by Porphyry of the Neoplatonic School, was taught and illustrated in the MYSTERIES.<sup>11</sup> Many have questioned and even denied this; and Lobeck, in his

11 "The accusations of atheism, the introducing of foreign deities, and corrupting of the Athenian youth, which were made against Socrates, afforded ample justification for Plato to conceal the arcane preaching of his doctrines. Doubtless the peculiar diction or 'jargon' of the alchemists was employed for a like purpose. The dungeon, the rack, and the faggot were employed without scruple by Christians of every shade, the Roman Catholics especially, against all who taught even natural science contrary to the theories entertained by the Church. Pope Gregory the Great even inhibited the grammatical use of Latin as heathenish. The offence of Socrates consisted in unfolding to his disciples the arcane doctrine concerning the gods, which was taught in the Mysteries and was a capital crime. He was also charged by Aristophanes with introducing the new god *Dinos* into the republic as the demiurgos or artificer, and the lord of the solar universe. The Heliocentric system was also a doctrine of the Mysteries; and hence, when Aristarchus, the

*Aglaophomus*, has gone to the extreme of representing the sacred festivals as little more than an empty show to captivate the imagination. As though Athens and Greece would for twenty centuries and more have repaired every fifth year to Eleusis to witness a solemn religious farce! Augustine, the Bishop of Hippo, has exploded such assertions. He declares that the doctrines of the Alexandrian Platonists were the original Esoteric doctrines of the first followers of Plato, and describes Plotinus as a Plato reincarnated. He also explains the motives of the great Philosopher for veiling the interior sense of what he taught.

Hence we may understand why the sublimer scenes in the Mysteries were always in the night. The life of the interior Spirit is the death of the external nature; and the night of the physical world denotes the day of the spiritual. Dionysus, the night-sun, is, therefore, worshipped rather than Helios, orb of day. In the Mysteries were symbolized the preexistent condition of the Spirit and Soul, and the lapse of the latter into earth-life and Hades, the miseries of that life, the purification of the Soul, and its restoration to divine bliss, or reunion with Spirit. Theon, of Smyrna, aptly compares the philosophical discipline to the mystic rites, and his views may be summarized from Taylor as follows:

Philosophy may be called the initiation into the true arcana, and the instruction in the genuine Mysteries. There are five parts of this initiation: I. the previous purification; II. the admission to participation in the arcane rites; III. the epoptic revelation; IV. the investiture or enthroning; V.—the fifth, which is produced from all these, is friendship and interior communion with God, and the enjoyment of that felicity which arises from intimate converse with divine beings. . . . Plato denominates the *epopteia*, or personal view, the perfect contemplation of things which are apprehended intuitively, absolute truths and ideas. He also considers the binding of the head and crowning as analogous to the authority which anyone receives from his instructors, of leading others into the same contemplation. The fifth gradation is the most perfect felicity arising from hence, and, according to Plato, an assimilation to divinity as far as is possible to human beings.<sup>12</sup>

Such is Platonism. "Out of Plato," says Ralph Waldo Emerson, "come all things that are still written and debated among men of

Pythagorean taught it openly, Cleanthes declared that the Greeks ought to have called him to account and condemned him for blasphemy against the gods." But Socrates had never been initiated, and hence divulged nothing which had ever been imparted to him.

12 Thomas Taylor, *Eleusinian and Bacchic Mysteries*, p. 47.

thought." He absorbed the learning of his time—that of Greece from Philolaus to Socrates; then that of Pythagoras in Italy; then what he could procure from Egypt and the East. He was so broad that all Philosophy, European and Asiatic, was in the doctrines; and to culture and contemplation he added the nature and qualities of the poet.

The followers of Plato generally adhered strictly to his psychological theories. Several, however, like Xenocrates, ventured into bolder speculations. Speusippus, the nephew and successor of the great Philosopher, was the author of the *Numerical Analysis*, a treatise on the Pythagorean Numbers. Some of his speculations are not found in the written *Dialogues*; but as he was a listener to the unwritten lectures of Plato, the judgment of Enfield is doubtless correct, that he did not differ from his Master. Though not named, he was evidently the antagonist whom Aristotle criticized, when professing to cite the argument of Plato against the doctrine of Pythagoras, that all things were in themselves numbers, or rather, inseparable from the idea of numbers. He especially endeavoured to show that the Platonic doctrine of ideas differed essentially from the Pythagorean, in that it presupposed numbers and magnitude to exist apart from things. He also asserted that Plato taught that there could be no *real* knowledge, if the object of that knowledge was not carried beyond or above the sensible.

But Aristotle was no trustworthy witness. He misrepresented Plato, and he almost caricatured the doctrines of Pythagoras. There is a canon of interpretation, which should guide us in our examination of every philosophical opinion: "The human mind has, under the necessary operation of its own laws, been compelled to entertain the same fundamental ideas, and the human heart to cherish the same feelings in all ages." It is certain that Pythagoras awakened the deepest intellectual sympathy of his age, and that his doctrines exerted a powerful influence upon the mind of Plato. His cardinal idea was that there existed a permanent principle of unity beneath the forms, changes, and other phenomena of the universe. Aristotle asserted that he taught that "numbers are the first principles of all entities." Ritter has expressed the opinion that the formula of Pythagoras should be taken symbolically, which is entirely correct. Aristotle goes on to associate these *numbers* with the "forms" and "ideas" of Plato. He even declares that Plato said: "forms are numbers," and that "ideas are substantial existences—real beings." Yet

Plato did not so teach. He declared that the final cause was the Supreme Goodness—τὸ ἀγαθόν.

"Ideas are objects of pure conception for the human reason, and they are attributes of the Divine Reason."<sup>18</sup> Nor did he ever say that "forms are numbers." What he did say may be found in the *Timæus*: "God [the Universal Nous or Mind] formed things as they first arose according to forms and numbers."

It is recognized by Modern Science that all the higher laws of Nature assume the form of quantitative statement. What is this but a fuller elaboration or more explicit affirmation of the Pythagorean doctrine? Numbers were regarded as the best representations of the laws of harmony which pervade the Kosmos. In Chemistry the doctrine of atoms and the laws of combination are actually, and, as it were, arbitrarily defined by numbers. As Mr W. Archer Butler has expressed it:

The world is, then, through all its departments, a living arithmetic in its development, a realized geometry in its repose.

The key to the Pythagorean dogmas is the *general formula of unity in multiplicity, the One evolving the many and pervading the many. This is the ancient doctrine of emanation in a few words. Even the apostle Paul accepted it as true. "Ἐξ αὐτοῦ, καὶ δι' αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἰς αὐτόν τὰ πάντα"—Out of him and through him and for him all things are—though the pronoun "him" could hardly have been used with regard to the Universal Mind by an Initiate—a "Master Builder."*

The greatest ancient Philosophers are accused of shallowness and superficiality of knowledge as to those details in exact Science of which the moderns boast so much; and Plato cannot escape the common fate. Yet, once more his modern critics ought to bear in mind, that the Sodalian Oath of the Initiate into the Mysteries prevented his imparting his knowledge to the world, in so many plain words. As Champollion writes:

It was the dream of his [Plato's] life to write a work and record in it, in full, the doctrines taught by the Egyptian hierophants; he often talked of it, but found himself compelled to abstain on account of the solemn oath.

Plato is declared by his various commentators to have been utterly ignorant of the anatomy and functions of the human body; to have known nothing of the uses of the nerves for conveying sensations;

<sup>18</sup> *History of Philosophy*, by Cousin, i p. ix.

and to have had nothing better to offer than vain speculations concerning physiological questions. He has simply generalized the divisions of the human body, they say, and given nothing reminding us of anatomical facts. As to his own views on the human frame, the Microcosmos being, in his mind, the image in miniature of the Macrocosmos, they are much too transcendental to obtain the least attention from our exact and materialistic sceptics. The idea of this frame being formed out of triangles, like the universe, seems preposterously ridiculous to several of his translators. Alone of the latter, Professor Jowett, in his introduction to the *Timæus*, honestly remarks that the modern Physical Philosopher

hardly allows to his notions the merit of being "the dead men's bones" out of which he has himself risen to a higher knowledge;<sup>14</sup>

forgetting how much the Metaphysics of golden times have helped the "physical" Sciences of the present day. If, instead of quarrelling with the insufficiency and at times the absence of strictly scientific terms and definitions in Plato's works, we analyze them carefully, the *Timæus* alone will be found to contain within its limited space of germs of every new discovery. The circulation of the blood and the law of gravitation are clearly mentioned, though the former fact, it may be, is not so clearly defined as to withstand the reiterated attacks of Modern Science; for, according to Prof. Jowett, the specific discovery that the blood flows out from one side of the heart through the arteries, and returns to the other through the veins, was unknown to him, though Plato was perfectly aware "that blood is a fluid in constant motion."

Plato's method, like that of Geometry, was to descend from universals to particulars. Modern Science vainly seeks a First Cause among the permutations of molecules; but Plato sought and found it amid the majestic sweep of worlds. For him it was enough to know the great scheme of creation and to be able to trace the mightiest movements of the Universe through their changes to their ultimates. The petty details, the observation and classification of which have so taxed and demonstrated the patience of modern Scientists, occupied but little of the attention of the old Philosophers. Hence, while a fifth-form boy of an English school can prate more learnedly about the little things of Physical Science than Plato himself, yet, on the other hand, the dullest of Plato's disciples could tell more about great cosmic laws and their mutual relations, and could

<sup>14</sup> Jowett, *The Dialogues of Plato*, ii. 508.

demonstrate a greater familiarity with and control over the Occult Forces which lie behind them, than the most learned professor in the most distinguished Academy of our day.

This fact, so little appreciated and never dwelt upon by Plato's translators, accounts for the self-laudation in which we moderns indulge at the expense of that Philosopher and his compeers. Their alleged mistakes in Anatomy and Physiology are magnified to an inordinate extent in order to gratify our self-love, until, in acquiring the idea of our own superior learning, we lose sight of the intellectual splendour which adorns the ages of the past; it is as if one should, in fancy, magnify the solar spots until he should believe the bright luminary to be totally eclipsed.

The wholesale accusation that the ancient Philosophers merely generalized, and that they practically systematized nothing, does not prove their "ignorance," and further it is untrue. Every Science having been revealed in the beginning of time by a *divine* Instructor, became thereby sacred, and capable of being imparted only during the Mysteries of Initiation. No initiated Philosopher, therefore—such as Plato—had the right to reveal it. Once postulate this fact, and the alleged "ignorance" of the ancient Sages and of some initiated classic authors, is explained. At any rate, even a correct generalization is more useful than any system of exact Science, which only becomes rounded and completed by virtue of a number of "working hypotheses" and conjectures. The relative practical unprofitableness of most modern scientific research is evinced in the fact that while our Scientists have a name for the most trivial particle of mineral, plant, animal, and man, the wisest of them are unable to tell us anything definite about the Vital Force which produces the changes in these several kingdoms. It is unnecessary to seek further than the works of our highest scientific authorities themselves for corroboration of this statement.

It requires no little moral courage in a man of eminent professional position to do justice to the acquirements of the Ancients, in the face of a public sentiment which is content with nothing less than their abasement. When we meet with a case of the kind we gladly give the bold and honest scholar his due. Such a scholar is Professor Jowett, Master of Baliol College, and Regius Professor of Greek in the University of Oxford, who, in his translation of Plato's works, speaking of "the physical philosophy of the ancients as a whole," gives them the following credit: 1. "That the nebular



theory was the received belief of the early physicists." Therefore it could not have rested, as Draper asserts,<sup>15</sup> upon the telescopic discovery made by Herschel 2. "That the development of animals out of frogs who came to land, and of man out of animals, was held by Anaximenes in the sixth century before Christ " Professor Jowett might have added that this theory antedated Anaximenes by many thousands of years, as it was an accepted doctrine among the Chaldeans, who taught it *exoterically*, as on their cylinders and tablets, and *esoterically* in the temples of Ea and Nebo—the God, and prophet or revealer of the Secret Doctrine.<sup>16</sup> But in both cases the statements are *blinds*. That which Anaximenes—the pupil of Anaximander, who was himself the friend and disciple of Thales of Miletus, the chief of the "Seven Sages," and therefore an Initiate as were these two Masters—that which Anaximenes meant by "animals" was something different from the animals of the modern Darwinian theory. Indeed the eagle-headed men, and the animals of various kinds with human heads, may point two ways: to the descent of man from animals, and to the descent of animals from man, as in the Esoteric Doctrine. At all events, even the most important of the present-day theories is thus shown to be not entirely original with Darwin. Professor Jowett goes on to show "that, even by Philolaus and the early Pythagoreans, the earth was held to be a body like the other stars revolving in space." Thus Galileo—studying some Pythagorean fragments, which are shown by Reuchlin to have still existed in the days of the Florentine mathematician,<sup>17</sup> being moreover, familiar with the doctrines of the old Philosophers—but reasserted an astronomical doctrine which prevailed in India in the remotest antiquity 4. The Ancients "thought that there was a sex in plants as well as in animals." Thus our modern Naturalists had but to follow in the steps of their predecessors. 5. "That musical notes depended on the relative length or tension of the strings from which they were emitted, and were measured by ratios of number."

15 *Conflict between Religion and Science* p. 240.

16 "The Wisdom of Nebo, of the God my instructor, all-delightful," says verse 7 on the first tablet, which gives the description of the generation of the Gods and creation.

17 Some Kabbalistic scholars assert that the original Greek Pythagoric sentences of Sextus, which are now said to be lost, existed at the time in a convent at Florence, and that Galileo was acquainted with these writings. They add, moreover, that a treatise on Astronomy, a manuscript by Archytas, a direct disciple of Pythagoras, in which were noted all the most important doctrines of their school, was in the possession of Galileo. Had some Rufinus got hold of it, he would no doubt have perverted it, as Presbyter Rufinus has perverted the above-mentioned sentences of Sextus, replacing them with a fraudulent version, the authorship of which he sought to ascribe to a certain Bishop Sextus. See Taylor's *Introduction to Iamblichus' Life of Pythagoras*. p. xvii.

6. "That mathematical laws pervaded the world and even qualitative differences were supposed to have their origin in number." 7. "That the annihilation of matter was denied by them, and held to be a transformation only." "Although one of these discoveries might have been supposed to be a happy guess," adds Prof. Jowett, "we can hardly attribute them to all to mere coincidences." We should think not; for, from what he says elsewhere, Prof. Jowett gives us a full right to believe that Plato indicates (as he really does) in *Timæus*, his knowledge of the indestructibility of Matter, of the conservation of energy, and the correlation of forces. Says Dr. Jowett:

The latest word of modern philosophy is continuity and development, but to Plato *this is the beginning and foundation of Science*.<sup>18</sup>

In short, the Platonic Philosophy was one of order, system, and proportion; it embraced the evolution of worlds and species, the correlation and conservation of energy, the transmutation of material form, the indestructibility of Matter and of Spirit. The position of the Platonists in the latter respect was far in advance of Modern Science, and bound the arch of their philosophical system with a keystone at once perfect and immovable.

Finally few will deny the enormous influence that Plato's views have exercised on the formation and acceptance of the dogmas of Christianity. But Plato's views were those of the Mysteries. The philosophical doctrines taught therein are the prolific source from which sprang all the old exoteric religions, the *Old* and partially the *New Testament* included, belonging to the most advanced notions of morality, and religious "revelations." While the literal meaning was abandoned to the fanaticism of the unreasoning lower classes of society, the higher classes, the majority of which consisted of Initiates, pursued their studies in the solemn silence of the temples, and also their worship of the One God of Heaven.

The speculations of Plato, in the *Banquet*, on the creation of the primordial men, and the essay on Cosmogony in the *Timæus*, must be taken allegorically, if we accept them at all. It is this hidden Pythagorean meaning in *Timæus*, *Cratylus* and *Parmenides*, and other trilogies and dialogues, that the Neo-Platonists ventured to expound, as far as the theurgical vow of secrecy would allow them.

<sup>18</sup> Introduction to *Timæus*, *Dialogues of Plato*, i, 590

The Pythagorean doctrine that *God is the Universal Mind diffused through all things*, and the dogma of the soul's immortality, are the leading features in these apparently incongruous teachings. Plato's piety and the great veneration he felt for the Mysteries, are sufficient warrant that he would not allow his indiscretion to get the better of the deep sense of responsibility which is felt by every Adept. "Constantly perfecting himself in perfect Mysteries, a man in them alone becomes truly perfect," says he in the *Phædrus* <sup>19</sup>

He took no pains to conceal his displeasure that the Mysteries had become less secret than they were in earlier times. Instead of profaning them by putting them within the reach of the multitude, he would have guarded them with jealous care against all but the most earnest and worthy of his disciples.<sup>20</sup> While mentioning the Gods on every page, his "Panthestic monism" is unquestionable, for the whole thread of his discourse indicates that by the term "Gods" he means a class of beings far lower in the scale than the One Deity, and but one grade higher than external man. Even Josephus perceived and acknowledged this fact, despite the natural prejudice of his race. In his famous onslaught upon Apion, this historian says:

Those, however, among the Greeks who philosophized in accordance with truth, were not ignorant of anything . . . nor did they fail to perceive the chilling superficialities of the mythical allegories, on which account they justly despised them. . . . By which thing Plato, being moved, says it is not necessary to admit anyone of the other poets into the "Commonwealth," and he dismisses Homer blandly, after having crowned him and pouring unguent upon him, in order that indeed he should not destroy, by his myths, the orthodox belief respecting the *One* [Deity].<sup>21</sup>

Those, therefore, who can discern the true spirit of Plato's Philosophy, will hardly be satisfied with the estimate which Prof. Jowett, in another part of his work, lays before his readers. He tells us that the influence exercised upon posterity by the *Timæus* is partly due to a misunderstanding of the doctrine of its author by the Neo-Platonists. He would have us believe that the hidden meanings which they found in this Dialogue, are "quite at variance with

<sup>19</sup> Cory, *Phædrus*, i. 328.

<sup>20</sup> This assertion is clearly corroborated by Plato himself, who says: "You say that in my former discourse, I have not sufficiently explained to you the nature of the *First*. I purposely spoke enigmatically, that in case the tablet should have happened with any accident, either by land or sea, a person without some previous knowledge of the subject, might not be able to understand its contents" (Plato, *Ep. ii.* p. 312; Cory, *Ancient Fragments*, p. 304).

<sup>21</sup> Josephus, *Against Apion*, ii. p. 1079.

the Spirit of Plato." This is equivalent to the assumption that Prof. Jowett understands what this spirit really was; whereas his criticism upon this particular topic rather indicates that he does not penetrate it at all. It, as he tells us, the Christians seem to find in his work their Trinity, the Word, the Church, and the creation of the World, in a Jewish sense, it is because all this *is* there, and therefore it is but natural that they should have found it. The outward building is the same; but the spirit which animated the dead letter of the Philosopher's teaching has fled, and we would seek for it in vain through the arid dogmas of Christian theology. The Sphinx is the same now, as it was four centuries before the Christian era; but the Œdipus is no more. He is slain because he has given to the world that which the world was not ripe enough to receive. He was the embodiment of truth, and he had to die, as every grand truth must, before, like the Phœnix of old, it revives from its own ashes. Every translator of Plato's works has remarked the strange similarity between the Philosophy of the Esoteric and the Christian doctrines, and each of them has tried to interpret it in accordance with his own religious feelings. So Cory, in his *Ancient Fragments*, tries to prove that it is but an outward resemblance; and does his best to lower the Pythagorean Monad in the public estimation and exalt upon its ruins the later anthropomorphic deity. Taylor, advocating the former, acts as unceremoniously with the Mosaic God. Zeller boldly laughs at the pretensions of the Fathers of the Church, who, notwithstanding history and chronology, and whether people will have it or not, insist that Plato and his school have robbed Christianity of its leading features. It is as fortunate for us as it is unfortunate for the Roman Church that such clever sleight-of-hand as that resorted to by Eusebius is rather difficult in our century. It was easier to pervert chronology, "for the sake of making synchronisms," in the days of the Bishop of Cæsarea, than it is now, and while history exists, no one can help people knowing that Plato lived six hundred years before Irenæus took it into his head to establish a *new* doctrine from the ruins of Plato's older Academy.

\* \* \*

This doctrine of the Universal Mind diffused through all things underlies all ancient Philosophies. The tenets of Bodhism, or Wisdom, which can never be better comprehended than when studying the Pythagorean Philosophy—its faithful reflection—are derived from this source, as are the exoteric Hindu religion and early Chris-

tianity. The purifying process of reincarnations—metempsychoses—however grossly anthropomorphized at a later period, must only be regarded as a supplementary doctrine, disfigured by theological sophistry, with the object of getting a firmer hold upon believers through a popular superstition. Neither Gautama Buddha nor Pythagoras, not yet Plato, intended to teach this purely metaphysical allegory *literally*. None of them addressed himself to the profane, but only to their own followers and disciples, who knew too much of the symbolical element used even during public instruction to fail to understand the meaning of their respective Masters. Thus they were aware that the words metempsychosis and transmigration meant simply reincarnation from one human body to another, when this teaching concerned a *human being*; and that every allusion of this or another sage, like Pythagoras, to having been in a previous birth a beast, or of transmigrating after death into an animal, was allegorical and related to the spiritual states of the human soul. It is not in the dead letter of the mystic sacred literature that scholars may hope to find the true solution of its metaphysical subtleties. The latter weary the power of thought by the inconceivable profundity of their ratiocination; and the student is never farther from truth than when he believes himself nearest its discovery. The mastery of every doctrine of the perplexing Buddhist and Brahmanical systems can be attained only by proceeding strictly according to the Pythagorean and Platonic method; from universals down to particulars. The key to them lies in the refined and mystical tenets of the spiritual influx of divine life. "Whoever is unacquainted with my law," says Buddha, "and dies in that state, must return to the earth till he becomes a perfect Samanean. To achieve this object, he must destroy within himself the trinity of Maya. He must extinguish his passions, unite and identify himself with the law [the teaching of the Secret Doctrine], and comprehend the religion of annihilation," *i e.*, the laws of Matter, and those of Karma and Reincarnation.

Plato acknowledges man to be the toy of the element of necessity—which is Karma under another name—in appearing in this world of matter. Man is influenced by external causes, and these causes are *daimonia*, like that of Socrates. Happy is the man physically pure, for if his external soul (astral body, the image of the body) is pure, it will strengthen the second (the lower Manas), or the soul which is termed by him the higher mortal soul, which.

though liable to err from its own motives, will always side with reason against the animal proclivities of the body. In other words, the ray of our Higher Ego, the lower Manas; has its higher light, the reason or rational powers of the Nous, to help it in the struggle with Kamic desires. The lusts of man arise in consequence of his perishable material body, so do other diseases, says Plato; but though he regards crimes as involuntary sometimes, for they result, like bodily disease, from external causes, Plato clearly makes a wide distinction between these causes. The Karmic fatalism which he concedes to humanity does not preclude the possibility of avoiding them, for though pain, fear, anger, and other feelings are given to men by necessity,

If they conquered these they would live righteously, and if they were conquered by them, unrighteously.<sup>22</sup>

The dual man—*i.e.*, one from whom the divine immortal Spirit has departed, leaving but the animal form and the sidereal, Plato's higher *mortal* soul—is left merely to his instincts, for he has been conquered by all the evils entailed on matter,<sup>23</sup> hence, he becomes a docile tool in the hands of the Invisibles—beings of sublimated matter, hovering in our atmosphere, and ever ready to inspire those who are deservedly deserted by their immortal counsellor, the Divine Spirit, called by Plato "genius."<sup>24</sup> According to this great Philosopher and Initiate, one

Who lived well during his appointed time would return to the habitation of his star, and there have a blessed and suitable existence. But if he failed in attaining this in the second generation he would pass into a woman [become helpless and weak as a woman], and should he not cease from evil in that condition he would be changed into some brute, which resembled him in his evil ways, and would not cease from his toils and transformation [*i.e.*, rebirths or transmigrations], until he followed the original principle of sameness and likeness within him, and overcame, by the help of reason, the latter secretions of turbulent and irrational elements [elementary dæmons] composed of fire and air, and water and earth, and returned to the form of his first and better nature<sup>25</sup>

These are the teachings of the Secret Doctrine, of the Occult Philosophy. The possibility of man losing, through depravity, his

<sup>22</sup> *Timæus*. See Prof. Jowett's work.

<sup>23</sup> This is the teaching of Esoteric Philosophy and this tenet was faintly outlined in *Isis Unveiled*. With Plato the triple man alone is perfect, *i.e.*, one whose Body, Soul, and Spirit are in close affinity.

<sup>24</sup> And by Theosophists the Higher Ego or Buddhi-Manas.

<sup>25</sup> Plato's *Timæus*.

Higher Ego was taught in antiquity, and is still taught in the centres of Eastern Occultism. And the above shows quite plainly that Plato believed in Reincarnation and in Karma just as we do, though his utterances in respect to the subject were in a mythical form.

There was not a Philosopher of any notoriety who did not hold to this doctrine of metempsychosis, as taught by the Brahmins, Buddhists, and later by the Pythagoreans, in its Esoteric sense, whether he expressed it more or less intelligibly. Origen and Clemens Alexandrinus, Synesius and Chalcidius, all believed in it; and the Gnostics, who are unhesitatingly proclaimed by history as a body of the most refined, learned, and enlightened men,<sup>26</sup> were all believers in metempsychosis. Socrates entertained opinions identical with those of Pythagoras; and, as the penalty of his divine Philosophy, was put to a violent death. The rabble has been the same in all ages. These men taught that men have two souls, of separate and quite different natures: the one perishable—the Astral Soul, or the inner, fluidic body—which must not be confused with the Astral *Body* or “double”; the other incorruptible and immortal—the Augoeides, or portion of the Divine Spirit—Atma-Buddhi; that the mortal or Astral Soul perishes at each gradual change at the threshold of every new sphere, becoming with every transmigration more purified. The Astral Man, intangible and invisible as he may be to our mortal, earthly senses, is still constituted of matter, though sublimated.

Now, if the latter means anything at all, it means that the above teaching about the “two souls” is exactly that of the Esoteric, and of many exoteric. Theosophists. The two souls are the dual Manas: the lower, personal “Astral Soul,” and the Higher Ego. The former—a Ray of the latter falling into Matter, that is to say animating man and making of him a thinking, rational being on this plane—having assimilated its most spiritual elements in the divine essence of the reincarnating Ego, perishes in its personal, material form at each gradual change, as Kama Rupa, at the threshold of every new sphere, or Devachan, followed by a new reincarnation. It perishes, because it fades out in time, all but its intangible, evanescent photography on the astral waves, burnt out by the fierce light which ever changes but never dies; while the incorruptible and the immortal “Spiritual Soul,” that which we call Buddhi-Manas and the individual SELF, becomes more purified with every new incarna-

See Gibbons' *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

tion. Laden with all It could save from the personal soul, it carries it into Devachan, to reward it with ages of peace and bliss. This is no *new* teaching, no "fresh development," as some of our opponents have tried to prove; and even in *Isis Unveiled*, the earliest, hence the most cautious of all the modern works on Theosophy, the fact is distinctly stated (Vol. i, p. 432 and elsewhere). The Secret Doctrine does not concede immortality to all men alike. It declares with Porphyry that only

Through the highest purity and chastity we shall approach nearer to [our] God, and receive, in the contemplation of Him, the true knowledge and insight.

If the human soul has neglected during its life-time to receive its illumination from its Divine Spirit, our personal God, then it becomes difficult for the gross and sensual man to survive his physical death for a great length of time. No more than the misshapen monster can live long after its physical birth, can the soul, once that it has become *too* material, exist after its birth into the spiritual world. The viability of the astral form is so feeble, that the particles cannot cohere firmly when once it is slipped out of the unyielding capsule of the external body. Its particles, gradually obeying the disorganizing attraction of universal space, finally fly asunder beyond the possibility of reaggregation. Upon the occurrence of such a catastrophe, the personal individual ceases to exist; his glorious Augoeides, the immortal SELF, has left him for Devachan, whither the Kama Rupa cannot follow. During the intermediary period between bodily death and the disintegration of the astral form, the latter, bound by magnetic attraction to its ghastly corpse, prowls about, and sucks vitality from susceptible victims. The man having shut out of himself every ray of the divine light, is lost in darkness, and, therefore, clings to the earth and the earthy.

No Astral Soul, even that of a pure, good and virtuous man, is immortal in the strictest sense; "from elements it was formed—to elements it must return." Only, while the soul of the wicked vanishes, and is absorbed without redemption—*i.e.*, the dead man has impressed nothing of himself on the Spirit-Ego—that of every other person, even moderately pure, simply changes its ethereal particles for still more ethereal ones. While there remains in it a spark of the Divine, the personal Ego cannot die *entirely*, as his most spiritual thoughts and aspirations, his "good deeds," the efflorescence of his "I-am-ship," so to speak, is now at one with his



immortal Parent. Says Proclus:

After death the soul [the spirit] continueth to linger in the aerial body [astral form], till it is entirely purified from all angry and voluptuous passions . . . then doth it put off by a second dying the aerial body as it did the earthly one. Whereupon, the ancients say that there is a celestial body always joined with the soul, which is immortal, luminous, and star-like.

Between Pantheism and Fetichism, we have been repeatedly told, there is but an insignificant step. Plato was a Monotheist, it is asserted. In one sense, he was that, most assuredly; but his Monotheism never led him to the worship of one *personal* God, but to that of a Universal Principle and to the fundamental idea that the absolutely immutable or unchangeable Existence alone, really *is*, all the finite existences and change being only appearance, *i.e.*, Maya.<sup>27</sup> His *Being* was noumenal, not phenomenal. If Heracleitus postulates a World-Consciousness, or Universal Mind; and Parmenides an unchangeable *Being*, in the identity of the universal and individual thought; and the Pythagoreans, along with Philolaus, discover true Knowledge (which is *Wisdom* or Deity) in our consciousness of the unchangeable relations between number and measure—an idea disfigured later by the Sophists—it is Plato who expresses this idea the most intelligibly. While the vague definition of some philosophers about the *Ever-Becoming* is but too apt to lead one inclined to argumentation into hopeless Materialism, the divine *Being* of some others suggests as unphilosophical an anthropomorphism. Instead of separating the two, Plato shows us the logical necessity of accepting both, viewed from an Esoteric aspect. That which he calls the “Unchangeable Existence” or “Being” is named *Be-ness* in Esoteric Philosophy. It is SAT, which becomes at stated periods the cause of the *Becoming*, which latter cannot, therefore, be regarded as *existing*, but only as something ever tending—in its cyclic progress toward the One Absolute Existence—to exist, in the “Good,” and at one with Absoluteness. The “Divine Causality” cannot be a personal, therefore finite and conditioned, Godhead, any more with Plato than with the Vedantins, as he treats his subject teleologically, and in his search for final causes often goes *beyond* the Universal Mind, even when viewed as a noumenon. Modern commentators have attempted on different occasions to prove fallacious the Neo-Platonic claim of a secret meaning underlying Plato’s teachings. They deny the presence of “any definite

27 *Sophistes*, p. 249

trace of a secret doctrine" in his *Dialogues*;

Not even the passages brought forward out of the insidious Platonic letters (VII. p. 341e, II. p. 314c) containing any evidence.<sup>28</sup>

As, however, no one would deny that Plato had been initiated into the MYSTERIES, there is an end to the other denials. There are hundreds of expressions and hints in the *Dialogues* which no modern translator or commentator—save one, Thomas Taylor—has ever correctly understood. The presence, moreover, of the Pythagorean number-doctrine and the sacred numerals in Plato's lectures settles the question conclusively.

He who has studied Pythagoras and his speculations on the Monad, which, after having emanated the Duad, retires into silence and darkness, and thus creates the Triad, can realize whence came the Philosophy of the great Samian Sage, and after him that of Socrates and Plato.

Speusippus seems to have taught that the psychical or thumetic soul was immortal as well as the Spirit or rational soul, and every Theosophist will understand his reasons for it. Unless a personality is entirely annihilated, which is extremely rare, the "thumetic soul," our lower Manas, is in one sense and portion of itself immortal—i.e., the portion that follows the Ego into Devachan. He also—like Philolaus and Aristotle, in his disquisitions upon the soul—makes of Ether an element; so that there were five principal elements to correspond with the five regular figures in Geometry. This became also a doctrine of the Alexandrian school.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, there was much in the doctrines of the Philaletheans which did not appear in the works of the older Platonists, but was doubtless taught in substance by the Philosopher himself, though, with his usual reticence, he did not commit it to writing, as being too arcane for promiscuous publication. Speusippus and Xenocrates after him, held, like their great Master, that the Anima Mundi, or World-Soul, was not the Deity, but a manifestation. Those Philosophers never conceived of the One as an animate Nature.<sup>30</sup> The original One did not *exist*, as we understand the term. Not till he had united with the many—emanated existence (the Monad and Duad)—was a Being produced. The *τίμιον*, honoured—the something manifested—dwells in the center

<sup>28</sup> Vide Hermann, I, pp. 544, 744, note 755.

<sup>29</sup> Theo. Arith., p. 62; on Pythag. Numbers.

<sup>30</sup> Plato: Parmenid., 141 E.

as in the circumference, but it is only the reflection of the Deity, the World-Soul.<sup>31</sup> In this doctrine we find all the spirit of Esoteric *Bodhism*, or Secret Wisdom.

Though some have considered Speusippus as inferior to Aristotle, the world is nevertheless indebted to him for defining and expounding many things that Plato had left obscure in his doctrine of the Sensible and Ideal. His maxim was "The Immaterial is known by means of scientific thought, the Material by scientific perception."<sup>32</sup>

Xenocrates expounded many of the unwritten theories and teachings of his master. He, too, held the Pythagorean doctrine, with its system of numerals and mathematics, in the highest estimation. Recognizing but three degrees of knowledge—*Thought*, *Perception*, and *Envisagement* (or knowledge by *Intuition*), he made Thought busy itself with all that which is beyond the heavens; Perception with things in the heavens; Intuition with the heavens themselves. The source of these three qualities is found in the Hindu *Manava Dharma Shastra*, speaking of the formation (creation, in vulgar parlance) of man. Brahma—who is Mahat, or the Universal Soul—draws from its own essence the Spirit, *the immortal breath which perisheth not in the human being*, while to the (lower) soul of that being, Brahma gives the Ahankara, consciousness of the Ego. Then is added to it "the intellect formed of the *three qualities*."

These three qualities are Intelligence, Conscience and Will; answering to the Thought, Perception and Envisagement (Intuition) of Xenocrates, who seems to have been less reticent than Plato and Speusippus in his exposition of soul. After his master's death Xenocrates travelled with Aristotle, and then became ambassador to Philip of Macedonia. But twenty-five years later he is found taking charge of the Old Academy, and becoming its President as successor of Speusippus, who had occupied the post for over a quarter of a century, and devoting his life to the most abstruse philosophical subjects. He is thought more dogmatic than Plato, and therefore must have been more dangerous to the schools which opposed him. His three degrees of knowledge, or three divisions of Philosophy, the separation and connection of the three modes of cognition and comprehension, are more definitely worked out than by Speusippus. With him, Science is referred to "that essence which is the object of pure thought, and is not included in the phe-

31 See Stobæus' *Ecl.*, i. 862.

32 Sextus: *Math.*, vii, 145.

nominal world"—which is in direct opposition to the Aristotelian-Baconian ideas; sensuous perception is referred to that which passes into the world of phenomena; and conception, to that essence "which is at once the object of sensuous perception and, mathematically, of pure reason—the essence of heaven and the stars." All his admiration notwithstanding, Aristotle never did justice to the Philosophy of his friend and co-disciple. This is evident from his works. Whenever he is referring to the three modes of apprehension as explained by Xenocrates, he abstains from any mention of the method by which the latter proves that scientific perception partakes of truth. The reason for this becomes apparent when we find the following in a biography of Xenocrates:

It is probable that what was peculiar to the Aristotelian logic did not remain unnoticed by him (Xenocrates); for it can hardly be doubted that the division of the existent into the absolutely existent and the relatively existent, attributed to Xenocrates, was opposed to the Aristotelian table of categories.

This shows that Aristotle was no better than certain of our modern Scientists, who suppress facts and truth in order that these may not clash with their own private hobbies and "working hypotheses."

The relation of numbers to Ideas was developed by Xenocrates further than by Speusippus, and he surpassed Plato in his definition of the doctrine of Invisible Magnitudes. Reducing them to their ideal primary elements, he demonstrated that every figure and form originated out of the smallest indivisible line. That Xenocrates held the same theories as Plato in relation to the human soul (supposed to be a number) is evident, though Aristotle contradicts this, like every other teaching of this philosopher.<sup>33</sup> This is conclusive evidence that many of Plato's doctrines were delivered orally, even were it shown that Xenocrates and not Plato was the first to originate the theory of indivisible magnitudes. He derives the Soul from the first Duad, and calls it a self-moving number.<sup>34</sup> Theophrastus remarks that he entered into and elaborated this Soul-theory more than any other Platonists. For he regarded intuition and innate ideas *δόξα*, in a higher sense than any, and made mathematics mediate between knowledge and sensuous perception.<sup>35</sup> Hence he built upon this Soul-theory the cosmological doctrine, and proved the necessary

33 *Metaph.*, 407. a. 3.

34 Appendix to *Timaeus*.

35 *Aristot., De Interp.*, p. 297

existence in every part of universal Space of a successive and progressive series of animated and thinking though spiritual beings.<sup>86</sup> The Human Soul with him is a compound of the most spiritual properties of the Monad and the Duad, possessing the highest principles of both. Thus he calls *Unity* and *Duality* (*Monas* and *Duas*) Deities, showing the former as a male Existence, ruling in Heaven as "Father Spirit" and an *uneven* number; and the latter, as a female Existence, Mother Soul, the Mother of the Gods (Aditi?), for she is the Soul of the Universe.<sup>87</sup> But if like Plato and Prodicus, he refers to the Elements as to Divine Powers, and calls them Gods, neither himself nor others connected any anthropomorphic idea with the appellation. Krische remarks that he called them Gods only that these elementary powers should not be confounded with the dæmons of the nether world<sup>88</sup> (the Elementary Spirits). As the Soul of the World permeates the whole Cosmos, even beasts must have in them something divine.<sup>89</sup> This, also, is the doctrine of Buddhists and Hermetists, and Manu endows with a living soul even the plants and the tiniest blade of grass—an absolutely Esoteric doctrine.

The dæmons, according to this theory, are intermediate beings between the divine perfection and human sinfulness,<sup>40</sup> and he divides them into classes, each subdivided into many others. But he states expressly that the individual or personal soul is the leading guardian dæmon of everyman, and that no dæmon has more power over us than our own. Thus the Daimonion of Socrates is the God or Divine Entity which inspired him all his life. It depends on man either to open or close his perceptions to the Divine voice. Like Speusippus, he ascribed immortality to the psychical body, or irrational soul. But some Hermetic philosophers have taught that the soul has a separate continued existence only so long as in its passage through the spheres any material or earthly particles remain incorporated in it; and that when absolutely purified, the latter are annihilated, and the quintessence of the soul alone becomes blended with its divine Spirit, the Rational, and the two are thenceforth one.

It is difficult to fail to see in the above teachings a direct echo of the far older Indian doctrines, now embodied in the so-called "Theosophical" teachings, concerning the dual Manas. The World-Soul,

36 Stob., *Ecl.*, i. 62.

37 Stob., *Ibid.*

38 Krische: *Forsch.*, p. 322, etc.

39 Clem: *Stro. Alex.*, v. 590.

40 Plutarch: *De Isid.*, ch. 25, p. 360.

that which is called by the Esoteric Yogacharyas "Father-Mother,"<sup>41</sup> Xenocrates referred to as a male-female Principle, the male element of which, the Father, he designated as the last Zeus, the last divine activity, just as the students of the Secret Doctrine designate it the third and last Logos, Brahma or Mahat. To this World-Soul is entrusted dominion over all that which is subject to change and motion. The divine essence, he said infused its own Fire, or Soul, into the Sun and Moon and all the Planets, in a pure form, in the shape of Olympic Gods. As a sublunary power the World-Soul dwells in the Elements, producing Daimonical (spiritual) powers and beings, who are a connecting link between Gods and men, being related to them "as the isosceles triangle is to the equilateral and the scalene."<sup>42</sup>

Zeller states that Xenocrates forbade the eating of animal food, not because he saw in beasts something akin to man, as he ascribed to them a dim consciousness of God, but

For the opposite reason, lest the irrationality of animal souls might thereby obtain a certain influence over us.<sup>43</sup>

But we believe that it was rather because, like Pythagoras, he had had the Hindu Sages for his Masters and Models. Cicero depicts Xenocrates as utterly despising everything except the highest virtue,<sup>44</sup> and describes the stainlessness and severe austerity of his character.

To free ourselves from the subjection of sensuous existence, to conquer the Titanic elements in our terrestrial nature through the Divine, is our problem.<sup>45</sup>

Zeller makes him say :

Purity, even in the secret longings of our heart, is the greatest duty, and only Philosophy and Initiation into the Mysteries help toward the attainment of this object.<sup>46</sup>

This must be so, since we find men like Cicero and Panætius, and before them, Aristotle and Theophrastus his disciple, expressed the highest regard for Xenocrates. His writings—treatises on Science, on Metaphysics, Cosmology and Philosophy—must have been legion. He wrote on Physics and the Gods; on the Existent, the One

41 See *The Secret Doctrine*. Stanzas, Vol. I.

42 Cicero, *De Nature Deorum*, i. 13. Strob., or Plut., *De Oroc. Defect.*, p. 416, c.

43 *Plato und die Alte Akademie*.

44 *Tusc.*, v. 18, 51.

45 *Ibid.* Cf. p. 559.

46 *Plato und die Alte Akademie*.

and the Indefinite; on Affections and Memory; on Happiness and Virtue; four books on Royalty, and numberless treatises on the State; on the Power of Law; on Geometry, Arithmetic, and finally on Astrology. Dozens of renowned classical writers mention and quote from him

Crantor, another philosopher associated with the earliest days of Plato's Academy, conceived the human soul as formed out of the primary substance of all things, the Monad or the *One*, and the Duad or the *Two*. Plutarch speaks at length of this Philosopher, who, like his Master, believed in souls being distributed in earthly bodies as an exile and punishment.

Herakleides, though some critics do not believe him to have strictly adhered to Plato's primal philosophy,<sup>47</sup> taught the same ethics. Zeller presents him to us as imparting, like Hicetas and Ecphantus, the Pythagorean doctrine of the diurnal rotation of the earth and the immobility of the fixed stars, but adds that he was ignorant of the annual revolution of the earth around the sun, and of the heliocentric system.<sup>48</sup> But we have good evidence that the latter system was taught in the Mysteries, and that Socrates died for "atheism," *i.e.*, for divulging this sacred knowledge. Herakleides adopted fully the Pythagorean and Platonic views of the human soul, its faculties and its capabilities. He describes it as a luminous, highly ethereal essence. He affirms that souls inhabit the milky way before descending into "generation" or sublunary existence. His dæmons, or spirits, are airy and vaporous bodies.

In the *Epinomis* is fully stated the doctrine of the Pythagorean numbers in relation to created things. As a true Platonist, its author maintains that wisdom can only be attained by a thorough enquiry into the Occult nature of the creation; it alone assures us an existence of bliss after death. The immortality of the soul is greatly speculated upon in this treatise; but its author adds that we can attain to this knowledge only through a complete comprehension of numbers; for the man unable to distinguish the straight line from the curved will never have wisdom enough to secure a mathematical demonstration of the invisible, *i.e.*, we must assure ourselves of the objective existence of our soul before we learn that we are in possession of a divine and immortal Spirit. Iamblichus says the same

47 Ed. Zeller : *Philos. der Griechen*.

48 *Plato und die Alte Akademie*.

thing; adding, moreover, that it is a secret belonging to the highest Initiation. The Divine Power, he says, always felt indignant with those "who rendered manifest the composition of the *icostagonus*," viz., who delivered the method of inscribing in a sphere the dodecahedron.

The idea that "numbers" possessing the greatest virtue produce always what is good and never what is evil, refers to justice, equanimity of temper, and everything that is harmonious. When the author speaks of every star as an individual soul, he only means what the Hindu Initiates and Hermetists taught before and after him, viz., that every star is an independent planet, which, like our earth, has a soul of its own, every atom of Matter being impregnated with the divine influx of the Soul of the World. It breathes and lives; it feels and suffers as well as enjoys life in its way. What naturalist is prepared to dispute it on good evidence? Therefore, we must consider the celestial bodies as the images of Gods; as partaking of the divine powers in their substance; and though they are not immortal in their soul-entity, their agency in the economy of the universe is entitled to divine honours, such as we pay to minor Gods. The idea is plain, and one must be malevolent indeed to misrepresent it. If the author of *Epinomis* places these fiery Gods higher than the animals, plants, and even mankind, all of which, as earthly creatures, are assigned by him a lower place, who can prove him wholly wrong? One must needs go deep indeed into the profundity of the abstract metaphysics of the old Philosophies, who would understand that their various embodiments of their conceptions are, after all, based upon an identical apprehension of the nature of the First Cause, its attributes and method.

When the author of *Epinomis*, along with so many other Philosophers, locates between the highest and the lowest Gods three classes of Daimons, and peoples the Universe with hosts of sublimated Beings, he is more rational than the modern Materialist. The latter, making between the two extremes—the unknown and the invisible, hence, according to his logic, the *non-existent*, and the objective and the sensuous—one vast hiatus of being and the playground of blind forces, may seek to explain his attitude on the grounds of "scientific Agnosticism"; yet he will never succeed in proving that the latter is consistent with logic, or even with simple commonsense.



# THEOSOPHICAL LITERATURE

**ISIS UNVEILED:** A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

Vol. I—SCIENCE, xlv+628 pages.

Vol. II—THEOLOGY, iv+640 pp.

*This exhaustive study of religion and science was Mme. Blavatsky's first presentation of Theosophy to the modern world. It is reproduced in photographic facsimile of the original edition (1877), two volumes bound in one (cloth), complete with general index and supplementary topical index.*

American Edition

**THE SECRET DOCTRINE:** The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

Vol. I—COSMOGENESIS, xlvii+676 pages. Vol. II—ANTHROPOGENESIS, xiv+798 pages.

*A systematic development of Theosophical teachings on Cosmogenesis, Anthropogenesis, Symbolism, Comparative Religion, with extensive comparisons of ancient wisdom with scientific conceptions. Facsimile of original (1888) edition, two volumes bound in one (cloth) complete with index (xxx pp).*

American Edition

**INDEX TO THE SECRET DOCTRINE:**

*All volume and page reference to the Original Edition (London 1888) and to the photographic facsimile reproduction (listed above).*

Reprint x+172 pages.

American Edition

**THE KEY TO THEOSOPHY:** An Exposition, in Question and Answer, of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy of Theosophy

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

Reprint of original edition (1889), xv+367 pages.

Indian Edition

**THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE:**

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

*A blank verse rendition of chosen fragments from "The book of the Golden Precepts," belonging to the contemplative or Mahayana (Yogacharya) School.*

Reprint of the original edition (1889) iv+79 pages (cloth).

Indian Edition

**TRANSACTIONS OF THE BLAVATSKY LODGE:**

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

Reprint of the original (1923) xxiv+149 pages (cloth).

American Edition

**A MODERN PANARION:**

By H. P. BLAVATSKY

*A collection of fugitive fragments.*

American Edition

**THE OCEAN OF THEOSOPHY**

By WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

*A comprehensive text on the Theosophical philosophy by a co-founder of the Theosophical Movement—widely used as a text in study classes.*

Reprint of original edition (1893), xv+182 pages.

Indian Edition

**THE BHAGAVAD-GITA** rendered into English by William Q. Judge

*An ancient dialogue of philosophical religion from the Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. (cloth) xviii+133 pages.*

Indian Edition

**NOTES ON THE BHAGAVAD-GITA**

By W. Q. JUDGE

**LETTERS THAT HAVE HELPED ME**

By W. Q. JUDGE

American Edition, and shorter Indian Edition

**"FORUM" ANSWERS**

By WILLIAM Q. JUDGE

Reprints from *The Theosophical Forum*

American Edition

**THE FRIENDLY PHILOSOPHER**

compiled from letters and talks by

Robert Crosbie, 415 pages, cloth

American Edition

**UNIVERSAL THEOSOPHY**

By ROBERT CROSBIE, Indian Edition

**FIVE YEARS OF THEOSOPHY**

Essays selected from the *Theosophist*.

American Edition

Order from

Theosophy Company (Mysore) Private Ltd.,  
4, Sir Krishna Rao Road, Bangalore 560 004 INDIA